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ABSTRACT

Outcomes of a restructuring project implemented in a North Carolina high school in 1987 are described in this paper. The Lead Teacher Model restructured the decision-making processes for both resource allocation and school scheduling. At the Alpha County High School, eight elected lead teachers taught part-time and, in addition assisted the principal in decision making and acted as support to their peers. The methodology for this case study was based on participant observation; interviews with the principal, 18 lead teachers, the school staff, 6 parents, and an unspecified number of students; and analysis of accountability reports. Five factors were identified for restructuring success: school culture, change, leadership, professionalizing the work environment, and improving learning opportunities and student outcomes. Outcomes included improved student opportunities and outcomes, staff morale and effort, and distinctive administrative and teacher leadership. Three tables are included. (17 references) (LMI)

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THE LEAD TEACHER MODEL: A RESTRUCTURED SCHOOL

A paper presented to the
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by
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ABSTRACT: Schools have a culture that includes barriers to restructuring relationships and procedures. Despite these inhibitors, a high school in North Carolina restructured both the method of deciding how to use scarce resources and the school day, using a Lead Teacher (LT) model. The North Carolina legislature gave this school, Alpha County High School (ACHS), special funds and freedom to ask for waivers from state accountability standards in 1987. In 1990, the time of this case study, ACHS continued to use eight elected LTs with parttime teaching duties to assist the principal in decisionmaking and to act as support to their teaching colleagues. Certain issues emerged as potent characteristics of the evolution and present state of the LT model. These issues are 1) the culture of a school, 2) change, 3) leadership, 4) professionalizing the work environment, and 4) improving learning opportunities and outcomes for students. The four-year history of the LT project reveals improved student opportunities and outcomes, improved staff morale and effort, as well as distinctive leadership on the parts of administrators and teachers.

The Lead Teacher Model: A Restructured School

Significance

What is a restructured school? If we found one, what changes would be notable for teachers and students? A school in rural North Carolina restructured by using teacher and administrator leadership. Beginning in 1987, Alpha County High School (ACHS) tossed bureaucratic modes to improve traditional measures .* At that time, the North Carolina legislature gave the educators at the school the opportunity to establish a plan to meet specific needs of their students and to create strategies and programs that would ensure student success. The faculty voted to create their own version of a Lead Teacher (LT) model, a recommendation of the Carnegie report , A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986).

If schools are permitted by law to "use funding and personnel resources in such a way to address the unique needs of their students" (Thinking for a Living, 1986), how will they do it? A case study of the ACHS LT model can inform educators and the public at-large. The process of a faculty's choosing goals for student success and then "owning" the decisions enough to contribute their time and energy to seeing that the decisions are implemented is one not fully documented. This study can enrich our understanding of ways to improve our schools.

Methodology/Techniques/Data Sources

The researcher conducted a case study of a school in rural North Carolina, known in this paper as Alpha County High School (ACHS). ACHS features a legislatively-sanctioned Lead Teacher model for school restructuring, in place for four years at the time of the case study--fall of 1991.

Case study

The case study research design is a qualitative one as distinguished from a quantitative one. The procedure is based on the theoretical assumptions and data collection described by Bogden and Biklen (1982), Stake (1978, 1987), Erickson (1986) and Patton (1987), among others.

It is the study of a single case, not as a sample or for comparison. The researcher does not

* Names are fictitious; data are real.

make hypotheses prior to the study, but looks to the data collected for issues and themes (Stake, 1978, 1987).

Case study methodology assumes that descriptive data are important. Case study is a detailed examination of one setting; in this case, one high school.

Data Collection

The researcher gathered data as a participant observer (Patton, 1987) for 32 days over six months. The researcher was on-site, visible to the staff and interacting with them in order to obtain data. While data collected include a history of the setting, the focus of the study is on the contemporary scene: the faculty, administration, and students in the on-going process of planning, teaching, learning and evaluating within a marked time period (Erickson, 1986).

The researcher observed formal settings, such as meetings, classes, Open House for parents, and team meetings with respective LTs. The researcher also observed informal settings, such as lunchroom activities for students and teachers, student activities in the halls outside of class, the day-long activities in the LT office and a 90-minute bus ride. All observational and interview data were collected in handwritten notes and audiotape recording.

The researcher observed meetings of the entire faculty, the 10-member Faculty Council, and the nine-member LT Council. The researcher attended all weekly LT meetings from August through December.

Interviews

The researcher interviewed the principal, the previous principal (now superintendent), the 18 teachers who had been or who presently serve as LTs, a guidance counselor, and four of the five secretaries in the school. The principal provided names of six parents to interview.

In selecting students to interview, the researcher relied, in part, on referrals from principal and teachers. The researcher then sought students from every facet of the school--academics, arts, etc. The interview questions were standardized and open-ended. For each role, all interviewees were asked the same sequence of questions with essentially the same words (Patton, 1987). Interviewees were promised anonymity. See footnote p. 1.

Triangulation

For purposes of triangulation--verification of researcher's perceptions and conclusions--the researcher visited the school for two full days in May. The eight current LTs were given an draft of the case study and interviewed as a group with the principal. An enlarged draft was given to the principal and five key informants among the LTs for perusal and comment. The researcher made corrections based on the feedback obtained from these parties.

Data the school staff had collected for the annual Accountability reports made to the N. C. Department of Public Instruction (DPI) contained most of the quantitative data: student attendance rates, discipline statistics for suspensions, numbers of dropouts, average student scores on standardized tests, attendance at post-secondary institutions.

On-going analysis of all the data revealed patterns, trends and commonalities. Five issues, or categories, emerged from the data of anecdote, conversation, and description. These are: the "culture" of the school, change, leadership, professionalization of the environment, and increasing student opportunities and outcomes. The researcher's interpretation of the data was crosschecked, or triangulated, by interviews with a range of informants, by multiple observations over four months time, and by explicit verification of facts by two follow-up visits and telephone interviews with seven of the key informants after they read the second draft of the case study.

The researcher intends to present ACHS with absolute fairness and objectivity. Therefore the researcher discarded data that seemed idiosyncratic or were not verified by triangulation.

Results/Discussion/Context of the case study

The case study of ACHS's LT model is presented through anecdote, conversation, and description that reflect five issues. According to Stake (1987), issues are important, unsettled matters. Since it is often a highly contextual circumstance, people disagree about the issue. The issue refers to a condition causing certain consequences and the consequences are valued differently by different people. The issues of this case study are:

1) the "culture" of a school,
2) the characteristics of change,

3) leadership,
4) professionalizing the teaching environment,
5) learning outcomes for students.

First, a look at the school.

The school

ACHS is located in a rural North Carolina county. Resources for the school and school system are meager beyond what is allotted by the state. Since 1987, the school staff, with the support and encouragement of the administrators, have restructured 1) relationships for decisionmaking, 2) the school day, and 3) the workplace of school.

In 1987, when ACHS was designated a participant in a pilot program called the Lead Teacher Model, the North Carolina legislature authorized $96,720 for a two-year period and permission to Alpha County Schools (ACS) Board of Education to request waivers from state-mandated procedures and budgeting.

ACHS's physical setting is a 30-year-old brick and concrete building, both strained and stained. The LT office, a former storage area, still holds supplies and textbooks, in addition to the three desks, computer, file cabinets and chairs to accommodate eight lead teachers and principal. Across from the science department, the location was deemed more accessible for all teachers than another, more spacious, room. The cramped quarters typify the scarce resources in the culture of the school.

Culture of the School

Within this traditional building, ACHS contains its own culture. Legislative and administrative fiat often focus on the obvious characteristics of school culture: management and measurement of students and teachers. More subtle characteristics are the ingrained values and norms as described by Lortie (1975), Sarason (1982, 1990), Bird and Little (1986), and Sizer (1984). Notable powerful characteristics are: teacher and administrator isolation foster inhibitions to collaboration; teacher allegiance to equity for teachers discourages job differentiation; resources are scarce and power relationships revolve around allocation of those resources--time, space, and money.

One damaging characteristic is the devaluing of intellectual inquiry. Demands on teacher time are too severe to allow extended intellectual discussion among staff or students. The culture of the school discourages teacher learning.

While the legislation (see Appendix 1) for the LT model reflects a culture that values management, inspection and control, the issues that emerge in the case study of ACHS reveal the power of modelled values and norming behaviors in reshaping these subtle characteristics. Standards for collegiality and collaboration emerge. How did this faculty begin to reshape the environment?

Beginning to restructure

The first major decision made by the ACHS staff was to choose two goals for the school. The LT model would be the vehicle for reaching the goals. Drawing from the Carnegie report (1986), the staff chose:

1) professionalizing the workplace for all staff,
2) increasing student learning opportunities and outcomes.

The staff, including secretaries and janitors as well as professionals, never wavered from these goals in the four years of the project. In 1990-1991, these goals continued to shape decisionmaking in LT meetings.

The faculty, in a two-day retreat in August, 1987, agreed on a job description and process for selection, by consensus, of four lead teachers. The first four LTs were paid five percent of their salary for job differentiation, teaching halftime and performing LT duties halftime. Part of the funding allowed adding four halftime positions to the faculty to absorb LT teaching duties. The job descriptions changed little over five years, in contrast to team organization and compensation. See Table 1.

insert Table 1 here

In 1990, the LTs were compensated by $600 per person; Alpha County Schools had absorbed the cost of the additional positions that freed LTs from fulltime teaching duties.

In a typical LT meeting, the eight team leaders and principal "come to consensus". The scarce resources of space, money, and time are all deliberated. Views are expressed, tolerated, supported or politely rejected. The principal and LTs model norming behaviors in both LT and team meetings. The veteran LTs stick to business; over time, the newcomers become more focused on school needs instead of departmental needs. Underlying the process is the principal's quiet insistence that teachers will make the decisions, especially about scarce resources.

The Culture of the School Has Scarce Resources

LTs debate how to spend monies for instruction, compromising and cutting to meet the most urgent needs. Time is as scarce as money, A fundamental assumption of the LT concept is that the LT role can give precious time to the classroom teachers, freeing them from searching for supplemental materials, data gathering, and record keeping. Paradoxically, the LTs frequently lament the lack of time to do all they envisioned for the role: "Most LTs neglect their own classrooms." "There's not enough time to do all that the job demands."

Time to teach, to plan, to have meaningful discussion with colleagues, and to do research is constrained by the limited number of adults in the school. Even with the addition of four one-halftime positions to free the LTs, these professionals still feel the pinch of time. Some of this dilemma is influenced by perceptions about equity.

Equity as a norming influence

Teachers have opposed job differentiation, like allowing teachers to teach parttime and perform other duties parttime (National Education Association Resolutions, 1982). The equity issue is mentioned by most of the former LTs in the context of the history of the project. The terms of service are that one applies and is elected by one's team each year, serving no more than two consecutive years. In 1989, an effort by the first four LTs to get this rescinded was voted down the faculty.

Ironically, the success of the LT model may well be due to the loyalty to equity. The LT

job is passed around the department. The perception that the LTs constitute a layer of bureaucracy between teacher and principal is not evident.

A positive effect of the equity norm is seen in the principal's insistence on collegiality in staffing. The current principal includes his staff, as did the principal before him, in hiring personnel and in assigning teaching duties. There are 20 new teachers on the staff since 1987, each hired on the recommendation of their respective departments. Teachers speak with pride: "We hired ___, you know". Such a practice is a beginning for collegiality. Both the veteran and the newly-hired teacher begin the relationship with a sense of ownership. The veteran has a vested interest in the success of the new department member; the new teacher enters the department, not as a stranger, but as a chosen colleague. A change in personnel is a positive experience in part because of attention to effects of change.

Change

Five characteristics of change are evident in the restructuring of ACHS through the LT model:

1) change is a process, not a product;
2) it is essential not to confuse means with ends;
3) change always involves competition for scarce resources which will be manifested in power struggles;
4) the leader(s) are critical in norm setting throughout the process;
5) to the degree that all constituents are included in the decisionmaking about the change, the change will be successful. (Sarason, 1982; Achilles & Keedy, 1983-84).

Meaningful change can bubble up from those closest to the work of the school, as the partnership of faculty and administration at ACHS has demonstrated.

The first year (1987-1988) of the freedom to design a restructured school was characterized by meetings, discussions, surveys, voting, and voting again. All 18 LTs interviewed agreed that acquiring skills in conflict resolution and in coming to consensus is essential to movement from a bureaucratic form of school governance to the present one.

Planning restructuring

Two committees spent a year researching possibilities for restructuring. See Table 2. The Professionalizing the Environment committee recommended an office, phone, and secretarial help

for exclusive use by the teachers.

insert Table 2 here

The faculty accepted the proposal from the Structuring the Learning Environment committee to begin a new schedule. With the new alternate-day schedule, student course load increased from six daily 55-minute classes to eight 90-minute classes over two days. Promotion as well as graduation requirements have increased. By 1993, units for graduation from ACHS will have increased from 22 to 26.

Support for the new schedule came, in part, from the desire of persons in each department to design new courses and to require one more course for graduation. In the spring of 1989, the ACS Board of Education approved ACHS' request to add one new course per department: physical education, social studies, math, science and English. What has been the effect of the new schedule?

Effects of the restructured day

A change facilitator must seek to change something because what one seeks to change is so embedded in the system, that if it is changed, changes are likely to occur elsewhere in the system (Sarason, 1990). The new schedule has had such an effect. Student enrollment is up in every department. There is pride that 92 percent of the entire student body is enrolled in a vocational course. The U.S. history course is taught over a two-year period, with the state's End-of-Course test divided into first- and second-year sections. Teachers noted:

> We're all teaching courses we love; that HAS to come across to the students.
>
> Preparation for teachers has increased, not decreased.
>
> We cut by a third the number of students a teacher sees in a day. Surely that makes a difference in teacher good will and patience at 1:55 in the afternoon.

The most frequent complaint is that the 90-minute classes are too long. Teachers have had

to change their lecture format of presentation, "throwing out a 20-year style of teaching", approved a LT, himself a veteran of over 25 years experience.

In the third year of use, the schedule is accepted with a healthy skepticism. It may make school better; it may make it worse. The minority of the faculty that dislike it have the annual faculty survey--over 90 items--and the LT structure as conduits for dealing with scheduling problems.

One may interpret the changes at ACHS as radical or merely tinkering around the edges of what is allowed by state fiat. The data indicate that Sarason's (1982) rule has been met: change has occurred when there are observable behavioral regularities. Enthusiasm for teaching as well as heightened student ambition are some of the regularities observed in this case study.

Leadership

The leaders in the "front offices" were crucial to change and to teacher leadership. These leaders had a sense of whom to involve when, when to listen and how to direct group energy. Leadership emerged from the ranks of the teachers. Several of the most experienced teachers led, with passion, from the beginning. Even with 1990-1991 salary supplements that average $17 a week, the current corps of eight LTs for a faculty of 56 has not wavered in its commitment to maintaining the opportunity for teacher decisionmaking.

Each of the two successive administrators set norms for shared responsibilities. Secretaries and janitors are encouraged to make decisions. The norming behavior of the current principal, Mark Shaw, sets a standard for respect of others in the school, while maintaining high expectations that each person will make a valiant professional effort to atttain group goals. The LTs model this, also, as noted in LT meetings and the telling of the history of the model. Even with salary supplements that amounted to less than $17 a week, the current LTs did not relinquish their high valuing of the opportunity to continue teacher leadership. Their behavior galvanized others to focus on a school mission.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) list the ability to articulate a vision as a leadership quality. The effective leader is able to identify opportunities and dangers associated with the vision and is able

to sequence events to identify the vision. Researcher noted instances in which Shaw modelled these skills frequently. For example, he used his personal data base of statistics about the school to focus the group's attention of possibilities for resolution of dilemma. As visionary, Shaw is concerned that the 20 newest teachers be socialized to value the LT model.

> They were each interviewed by their teams before they were hired. Team play is important. They get some of the history of the project when they ask why we have 90-minute class periods.

Expectations for the leader at ACHS remain high. The 20-item Principal's Survey, completed annually by faculty confirms this. The lowest approval rating for Shaw in 1989-90 was 74 percent. Staff dissatisfaction may reflect, not failed achievement, but high expectation.

How scarce resources, change, and leadership have manifested themselves in the culture of the school of ACHS is also illustrated in the following sections on professionalizing the environment and increasing learning opportunities and outcomes for students.

Professionalizing the Environment

In 1987, ACHS teacher leaders set out to determine the characteristics of a professional environment. Following fact-finding visits to observe professional workplaces, they made purchases to shape ACHS as a more professional workplace. Professional components of their workplace are:

- -secretaries who work solely for the teachers;
- -a Lead Teacher office for exclusive use by faculty;
- -faculty opportunity to delegate clerical tasks in order to focus on professional tasks;
- -consistent opportunity to give input into policymaking for the school;
- -opportunity to give input into slicing the monetary pie of scarce resources for instructional supplies.

They do not have the professional components of a flexible workday, the right to reject clients, time to confer and to reflect with colleagues, or to pursue professional enrichment activities underwritten by their employer. However, ACHS in 1991 is a more professional environment than it was five years ago. Given legal underpinnings, start-up money, and astute leadership, a committed faculty can shape an environment that approaches professionalism.

Being a Lead Teacher

The mean number of years of experience for the 18 LTs is 16.2, the median 14. With the exception of one rookie, the range of experience is from 11-29 years. They have also spent the majority of their years teaching at ACHS, that mean being 11.6. These LTS are veteran teachers whose teaching careers have been confined to rural North Carolina.

Lead Teacher logs kept for the first three years of the model reveal 27 categories of activity, the three most common being curriculum, attending meetings, and student management. "Those are the toughest to change", noted a former LT. "I'm not surprised that we spent so much time on them." Curriculum items tend to be particularistic rather than theoretical or innovative. Finding a speaker is more likely the task than planning and research.

Several LTs lament that there is not enough time for reading and research. This may be a symptom of scarce resources--there is no one else to do the tasks that the LTs are doing. The equity ethic and anti-intellectual atmosphere of modern schools may inhibit LTs from insisting that reading on the job is a reasonable use of their time.

Regardless of the perceived shortcomings, the 1990-1991 LTs agreed with Glickman's (1990) observation: the more a school is improved, the more there seems to be a need for improvement. The professional environment of ACHS is now one of expectation, not of acceptance. The staff, through the LTs, created more opportunities for students. They expected measures of outcomes to improve and they did.

Increasing Student Opportunities and Outcomes

When faculty members of ACHS designed their own accountability model and had the flexibility to meet goals they chose, student outcomes improved on all conventional measures. Attendance is up, as is enrollment in postsecondary education. More students are taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test and scoring higher on it. See Table 3.

insert Table 3 here

Measures of satisfaction, drawn from the annual surveys of parents, students, and faculty, are positive. Student performance improved over the history of the project. Little else changed. Students were not better prepared from middle school; parents did not become more educated or affluent; teacher profiles did not reflect greater preparation or expertise. What did change was increased dialogue across grade levels and the curriculum. Further communication takes place through attention to annual surveys of parents, students, and faculty. The LT method of governance and team building in the departments provided avenues for improved outcomes. Setting norms for behavior by principals reinforced valuing of student opportunity and outcomes. Teachers have modelled communication and collaboration for each other and for students.

Conclusions

Is the LT model at ACHS real reform or tinkering around the edges? A radically restructured school may allow serious intellectual exploration on the part of students and teachers. It may be shaped by student need rather than bus and cafeteria schedules. Accountability measures may be more robust than counting who is present at a given time.

One school, ACHS, seized an opportunity to use the LT model as a means to restructure within the confines of a "culture" of school. Given funding and leadership, the faculty showed that barriers to change and collegiality could be lessened. The school became a relatively more professional place to work. A vigorous dialogue is ongoing among teachers and administrator. Student performance has improved on all state measures.

We know more than we can tell, says Polyani (1967). To focus on particulars prevents a holistic understanding. The essence of the model is more than statistics for attendance and standardized test scores. The LT story reveals some issues about school culture and school restructuring. There may be others yet to be observed. ACHS's efforts to improve the workplace for students and teachers is a model, not necessarily to replicate, but from which to learn.

Table 1: Composition of Lead Teacher teams and salary differential, 1987 and 1990

	LT teams : one teacher per team	Salary differential
1987	4	
	Health/Physical Education Communication/Social Studies Science/Math Vocations/Business	5% of salary (up to $1500)
1990	8	$600 per teacher
	Health/Physical Education Communications Social studies Science Social Studies Math Vocational Business Occupations	

Table 2: Committees planning restructuring, 1987-1988

Committee	members	adopted recommendations
Structuring the Learning Environment	10	Alternate-day schedule of eight 90-minute classes over two days
Professionalizing the Environment	9	Office for exclusive use by teachers Telephone for teachers Three full-time secretaries for teachers

Table 3: Student outcomes comparisons

Dropouts		Scholastic Aptitude Test		
			1987	1988
1989	61	took test	44	61
1990	40	math score	401	450
		verbal score	340	402

Parent survey questions

I came to school often to discuss my child's accomplishments.

1988 23% agreed

1989 73% agreed

Academic learning is a priority for ACHS.

1988 29% agreed

1989 62% agreed

Teacher survey questions

Teachers participate in determining faculty assignment often.

1988 29% agreed

1989 56% agreed

Students attend class regularly and punctually.

1988 66% agreed

1989 91% agree

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